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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-5400

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FCC Mailroom

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

In the process of reconstruction of Puerto Rico's infrastructure, communications are a critical element.

Puerto Rico recently filed a waiver request with the Commission asking the agency to suspend the requirement that carriers use the National Verifier eligibility determination system for the "Lifeline" communications service until after the new verification program is proven to be operational. Lifeline in Puerto Rico provides with access to telecommunications services to a very large number of the population including most of our rural residents, low-income, elderly and veterans.

The FCC denied the waiver request filed by the Puerto Rico Telecommunications Bureau and Chairwoman Sandra Torres. I write in support of the people and Government of Puerto Rico to urgently request the FCC to reconsider that position and grant additional waivers to Puerto Rico under this program.

I support the ultimate purpose of the National Verifier, however there will be issues with a mandate in states and territories where technology may not be fully deployed and access to required state databases to confirm applicant eligibility may not be uniformly available or may take longer than the standard time frame to be made viable. For example, in Puerto Rico the Medicaid and Public Housing databases may be accessible but not necessarily so Veterans, PAN (the local version of SNAP) and others. Without full database access it may not be possible to sign up new customers or re-certify existing customers eligibility.

There are other special challenges for this implementation in Puerto Rico, including how the National Verifier's database may not be well designed for the compound family names which is not only are the traditional cultural usage in our community but are the actual legal forms of naming persons under our civil laws; or how the data entry portal may fail to include necessary

application program interfaces (APIs) that ease the applicant process to enter their personal information and streamline the application process.

Under the National Verifier roll-out process by stages, Puerto Rico is supposed to be in the soft launch status since 11 October but the expectation is that all systems will not be in place to make the mandate effective at the end of the 90 day period before "hard launch".

Some states have reported as much as 75% of potential enrollees aren't incorporated in the eligibility data bases at the hard launch, needing to be manually reincorporate. In Puerto Rico this could mean hundreds of thousands of families losing essential service and a major social and economic disruption.

I urge and will also strongly support any request from the Governor of Puerto Rico and the Chairwoman of the Puerto Rico Telecommunications Bureau, for a reconsideration to be made to the extent allowed by law and regulations for granting of these waivers. I stand ready to join them in conversations at the FCC level to seek this if needed. Do not hesitate in reaching out to my office as this important matter is evaluated.

Respectfully,



Jennifer González-Colón
Member of Congress